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A TROPICAL AIR-PLANT.

BY CHARLES WRIGHT.

A WONDERFUL tree—if tree it can be called—grows throughout the West India Islands, in South America as far south as Brazil, and perhaps in Florida. It is not remarkable for its beauty, nor for its great size, but for its irresistible power of destroying other trees.

It is an epiphyte (*Clusia rosea* Linn.), perhaps a true parasite. Whether it ever germinates in the ground I know not; nor do I know why it should not, if it can sprout from a woodpecker's hole in a palm. Certain it is, that of hundreds which I have seen, I never saw a young plant attached to the soil. It grows on many kinds of trees, and at almost any height above the earth. In some situations it grows feebly. On a palm, it never or rarely attains to any considerable size; whether there is an incompatibility between the two growths, or whether, as is commonly the case on these trees, it germinates at too great a height. On the spreading branch of a tree it thrives better, but seems there to be not in its proper place. In any case, its main development is downward. When on a branch remote from the trunk, the descending axis—root or trunk, whichever it may be—is like a cord, increasing to the size of a rope, or a hawser, or growing even larger; rarely branching, but, sometimes, near the ground sending off stays. The ascending axis makes little more than a bush, while the root may be thirty or forty feet long. In one respect, this is like a true root,—it branches irregularly,—while, on the ascending trunk the leaves and branches are in pairs.

In order to attain its full development, it seems necessary that it should germinate at a point from which the descending axis shall pass in proximity to the trunk of the tree; and, it has seemed, that if this point be very high, it is a circumstance unfavorable to its rapid growth.

Supposing, then, our plant to start under favorable auspices, not very high above the ground, and from a hole or a fissure in an erect trunk, the ascending stem presents nothing of special interest, but the root, passing down near the foster-tree, is most singularly affected by it. It would seem as if possessed of a most grateful affection for that which gives it support; so much so, as to multiply arms with which to embrace it. It sends off, from time to time, at irregular distances, from one side or the other, slender, almost thread-like branches, which pass horizontally around the tree, till they meet on the opposite side and unite; or, it may be, if two should *not* meet, they would pass entirely round it and unite again with the main root. On this point, I either made no careful observations, or my memory is at fault. Gradually the foster-tree is embraced by a succession of these cords. But, by the same regular growth, these cords spread upward and downward, till they become hoops. And these hoops often send off branches from one to another; and these in their turn widen, till the tree is inclosed in a living cylinder or a cylindrical network of bands, having immense strength; and as these seem to increase only laterally, the growth of the tree is checked, and its destruction is inevitable, sooner or later, according to its less or greater power of endurance.

A tree, on which the Copey has woven a pretty complete net, cannot long retain its vitality. Its circulation is stopped and it dies. But this *seems* not to check the growth of the destroyer, so long as the trunk remains erect. But when they both fall, the parasite cannot long survive. It would seem that it required either elevation or an erect position for its existence.

I can recall to mind but one instance of a Copey growing from the ground, and it is probable that in this case the place whence it started was low, and it had time to reach the soil and fasten its roots there before the death and decay of its foster-parent.

Copey is, probably, the aboriginal or Carib name of the plant, which, like many others, has been retained. Scotch lawyer, or Scotch attorney, by which name it is known in Jamaica, is not altogether flattering to legal gentlemen of Caledonian extraction.

THE MOTTLED OWL.

BY DR. W. WOOD.

OF the genus *Scops*, there are some twenty-five or thirty species in all parts of the globe, only one of which, according to Cassin, is found in New England. From the time of Pennant till they were separated by the Prince of Canino (Charles Lucien Bonaparte), the mottled (*Strix Asio*) and the red owl (*Strix Nævia*) were considered two distinct species: since that time, the writers on ornithology—so far as I have been able to learn—consider them the same bird. Some, and probably the most, believe that the mottled is the adult, and the red the young, while others are equally sanguine that the reverse is true. Brewer, in his synopsis of the birds of North America, says that the red-plumaged bird is the adult. In his opinion he is sustained by Doctor Cabot, of Boston, and many other distinguished naturalists. Audubon says, "The red owl of Wilson and other naturalists is merely the young of the bird called by the same authors the mottled owl." Cassin, in the Pacific Railroad Report (vol. ix, p. 52), agrees with Audubon, yet says "the two stages of plumage described above (adult and young) have been regarded as characterizing distinct species, and they do present a problem scarcely to be considered as fully solved." And furthermore he says, "this bird pairs and rears young while in the red plumage, and it is not unusual to find a mottled male and red female associated or the reverse." While Audubon says, "By the middle of August they are